

Meany's Feud With Sen. McGovern

By Jack Anderson

MIAMI — AFL-CIO chief George Meany, the angry man behind the stop McGovern drive, has made kindling of every olive branch the McGovern forces have offered him.

The durable old despot has been cordial enough to George McGovern in person and even gave his blunt blessing to a McGovern speech at the AFL-CIO convention.

Privately, however, the old curmudgeon breathes fire at the mention of McGovern's name, calls him "the candidate of amnesty, acid and appeasement" and threatens to withhold AFL-CIO support if he's nominated.

What's more, Meany apparently won't be mollified. He's accustomed to settling Democratic presidential politics in the smoke-filled backrooms, with his own stogie predominant. And he's too old and stubborn to let party reforms change the political habits of a lifetime.

Some intimates say he turned sour on McGovern during the Senate battle over Section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1966. The AFL-CIO sought to repeal this section, which permits states to adopt right-to-work laws that weaken labor unions.

The move was defeated by a filibuster, which pro-labor senators tried in vain to shut off. On the first roll call, McGov-

ern voted to stop the filibuster.

McGovern Mix-Up

This was unpopular in McGovern's native South Dakota, which has a right-to-work law. He, therefore, notified two top labor lobbyists—the AFL-CIO's Andy Biemiller and the Retail Clerks' Charles Lipsen—that he would like to change his vote. He asked for their agreement, promising he would stick with them if they really needed his vote.

Biemiller agreed to give McGovern a "pass," that is, to release him from his labor commitment unless his vote should be needed in the clutch.

On the next roll call, McGovern's vote wasn't decisive, so he switched in favor of the filibuster. He was the only one who changed his vote.

Meany was so angry that the lobbyists didn't dare tell him they had okayed McGovern's reversal. The old labor lord was attending a shindig at Miami's Americana Hotel when he learned they had lost a vote on the second roll call.

Witnesses recall that he turned on Lipsen, who had flown to Miami for the occasion.

"Who was the double-crosser?" growled Meany.

"Let me explain," Lipsen began.

Meany cut him off. "I don't want any explanations," he thundered. "Just tell me who was the double-crosser."

Lipsen kept trying to explain the circumstances but finally was browbeaten into simply divulging McGovern's name. That was all Meany wanted to hear.

Rather than embarrass the two subordinates, McGovern never tried to square himself with Meany. Only reluctantly would McGovern now confirm the incident to us six years afterward. Lipsen refused to comment, saying only that Meany was "a great man." And Biemiller couldn't be reached.

Meeting With Meany

At the start of his presidential campaign last year, McGovern carefully avoided compromising the two labor lobbyists and, therefore, didn't mention that he had cleared his controversial vote in advance. All he said to Meany was: "I was wrong on the 14(b) matter. I struck out. I made a mistake."

To McGovern's surprise, Meany shrugged it off. "What upset me more than that," he grunted, "was your criticism of me on the Russian wheat deal."

As Food for Peace director during the Kennedy administration, McGovern had accused Meany of blocking wheat shipments to Russia. The AFL-CIO chief said it wasn't true.

McGovern said his information had come from the highest authority. "But if I was wrong," he said, "I apologize."

What really bothers Meany, say some intimates, is McGovern's antiwar record. But whatever it is, the 77-year-old labor leader intends to summon all his fading powers to block McGovern's nomination.

Democratic Doings

Running Mates—Party regulars are pushing Wilbur Mills for the vice presidential nomination. As House Ways and Means chairman, he has clout with the big corporations. And the Democrats are so broke, they need a candidate with access to some corporate cash. George McGovern, however, doesn't want any of the party's big guns as his running mate. He has talked to subordinates even about picking a non-politician, perhaps a college president or a consumer advocate like Ralph Nader, for the No. 2 spot. Hubert Humphrey told us that, if he should be nominated, he'd try to persuade McGovern to accept the vice presidential nomination.

McGovern's Acceptance—George McGovern has been quietly collecting ideas from his staff for an acceptance speech in case he should win the Democratic presidential nomination. He'll write the final draft himself, because he's uncomfortable with someone else's phrases. Throughout the campaign, he'll avoid formal speeches as much as possible. He prefers the informality of a press conference.

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